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ROSES AT LAST FOR MOTT WITH BLACK-EYED SUSANS LIKELY IN THE FUTURE FOR COUNTRY HOUSE

LOUISVILLE, KY (Sunday, May 5, 2019) – Juddmonte Farms' Tacitus and Mrs. J. V. Shields Jr. et al.'s Country House have exited their Kentucky Derby (GI) efforts in good shape, trainer **Bill Mott** said. While Tacitus, who was moved from fourth to third following the demotion of disqualified winner Maximum Security, is under consideration for the Belmont Stakes (GI) in five weeks, elevated victor Country House is naturally seriously looking at the second leg of the Triple Crown, Pimlico Race Course's Preakness Stakes (GI) in two weeks' time.

"I thought (Country House) had the effort in him and I was very surprised that he broke and was as close as he was early," said Mott, who saddled his first Kentucky Derby starter in 1984 and got his first victory Saturday. "I would have thought it would have been the other way around with Tacitus up where Country House was and Country House in the back where Tacitus was—but that's why it's so interesting. You don't know what is going to happen.

"I really believe that the call that was made yesterday really shows the integrity of sport. It wasn't an easy call, but if they let that go yesterday, I think it would have been much more talked about. I don't know when the objection was lodged. I spoke to **Jose (Ortiz)**, who told me that he thought for sure that (**Maximum Security**) would come down and Jose being behind them had the best view of all. I sent **Flavien (Prat)** to the phone to get in there and talk to (the stewards). It was mostly based on what Jose said. Then, of course, I had to look at the films like everyone else.

"I'm thrilled with (Country House) and I'm happy for everyone who has worked with the horse and I think they deserved the win. It's just such an unusual way to have to go to the winner's circle and win a Kentucky Derby. This Kentucky Derby will be talked about for a long time, up there with Shoemaker standing up at the sixteenth pole (in 1957 on Gallant Man). It's one of those things that's not going to go away. We're going to take the win and hopefully we come back and Country House runs big in the future, whatever race it may be—whether it's the Preakness, Belmont, Travers—whatever it is. You hope he continues to show the quality horse that he is.

"The discussion (about the Preakness) is going to start in the next day or two, I'm sure," Mott said. "People want to see the Derby winner in the Preakness. Certainly, for Country House, there's some pressure to go. With Tacitus, there isn't any and we are well-suited with him to go to the Belmont."

If Country House competes in the Preakness (May 18), it will be his fourth race in eight weeks' time, following the Louisiana Derby (March 23), Arkansas Derby (April 13) and yesterday's Kentucky Derby.

"(With Country House) we're talking about a horse who has had quite a few races in a short period of time, if he runs in the Preakness. It may compromise his chances a bit and it's not a normal situation to run so often, but the Triple Crown is not a normal situation. It never has been and I don't think they should space them out any more. The challenge of the Triple Crown is that it's three races really close together and it takes a champion. It takes a **Justify** to win those kinds of races.

"I saw **Jason (Servis)** as we crossed the track leaving the tunnel after the race," Mott concluded. "He was very gracious and said congratulations. I said I'm sorry it happened this way. Jason is a professional and I'm sure he's a great horseman. I'm sure he feels terrible, but it is what it is."

OTHER KENTUCKY DERBY NOTES

CODE OF HONOR (2nd) – Hall of Fame trainer **Shug McGaughey** was on hand Sunday morning to check on his Kentucky Derby runner-up **Code of Honor**, and couldn't have been more pleased with how the son of **Noble Mission** emerged.

"I thought he ran really good," McGaughey said of the chestnut colt who crossed the wire third after making a move on the inside but was elevated to second via the disqualification of Maximum Security. "He had a really good trip and when he turned for home he stuck his head in there and sort of was startled a bit at something and then (jockey **John Velazquez**) had trouble getting him going again. But when those horses opened up, he tried to come back again. I thought he ran really well."

McGaughey said he didn't see much of the incident that resulted in Maximum Security being disqualified, that he was focused strictly on his runner. After watching the race back multiple times last night, the Kentucky Derby-winning conditioner felt the stewards' decision – tough as it was – was the correct one.

"Last night I was looking the pictures and they were pretty incriminating pictures," McGaughey said. "To see the pictures, I can't doubt what happened. We got lucky that it wasn't worse. But I don't think it was **(Luis) Saez's** fault. I think (Maximum Security) saw something and went out like that and just almost caused a wreck."

Despite winning the Fountain of Youth Stakes (GII) on March 2, Code of Honor came into the Kentucky Derby somewhat under the radar following his third-place finish behind Maximum Security in the Florida Derby (GI). Whether he gets a chance to further elevate himself in the Preakness Stakes (GI) on May 18 is something McGaughey said would be decided in the next few days.

"I don't know. I'll have to talk to (owner) **Mr. (Will) Farish,**" McGaughey said. "He'll go back to New York this afternoon and we'll go from there. I would definitely like to have a fresh horse for Saratoga and finish the year up. So we'll just see."

IMPROBABLE (4th)/ GAME WINNER (5th)/ROADSTER (15th) – Hall of Fame trainer **Bob Baffert** reported via text Sunday morning that he had "no plans yet" for his trio of Kentucky Derby runners in the aftermath of Saturday's race.

Impossible finished the best of the bunch when he crossed the wire in fifth and was later elevated to fourth via disqualification. **Game Winner** had another exceptionally wide trip and had to rally from 18th early on to get up to hit the wire in sixth, then be elevated to fifth.

Roadster never mounted a serious challenge and ended up 15th following the disqualification.

"He broke all right but never traveled down the stretch the first time," jockey **Florent Geroux** said of Roadster's trip. "He started picking up horses down the backside, but when I hit the half-mile pole, I was just out of horse. I am not sure if he didn't like the track but it felt like he never ran."

MASTER FENCER (6th) – **Katsumi** and **Yasuyo Yoshizawa's Master Fencer**, trained by **Koichi Tsunoda** exited his adjudged sixth-place Kentucky Derby (GI) finish in top shape, according to his connections. As stated immediately following his eye-catching closing finish from last place, he is pointing toward the Belmont Stakes (GI) in five weeks' time.

WAR OF WILL (7th) – Less than 24 hours after being in the eye of one of the most surreal editions of the Kentucky Derby in its 145-year history, trainer **Mark Casse** found himself marveling at another remarkable feat Sunday morning.

He pulled out **Gary Barber's** multiple graded stakes winner **War of Will** to see what the day after might reveal after the son of **War Front** colt almost clipped heels with **Maximum Security** – an incident that helped lead to the latter's history-making disqualification after crossing the wire first. To his relief, the Canadian Hall of Fame trainer saw nothing but a horse ready to regroup and potentially do it all again in two weeks.

"As much as I want to win the Kentucky Derby, I feel like a lucky man today because I just got him out and jogged him and he's perfect," Casse said. "The horse racing world should be happy War of Will is such an athlete because not every horse doesn't go down there. I've been saying he's special for a long time."

That War of Will stayed on his feet after the incident near the five-sixteenths pole and ran on to cross the wire eighth – later elevated to seventh – was about the only thing the racing community could agree upon as a clear bright spot during a most memorable edition of the Run for the Roses. The handsome bay colt barely had a scratch on him in the aftermath and is expected to be Preakness Stakes (GI) bound as long as his buoyant energy level remains just that in the coming days.

While the chatter around whether **County House** should have been elevated to victory via disqualification likely will be discussed for years to come in racing circles, Casse for one had no doubt about the call – pointing to the fact that Maximum Security appeared to come out several paths, causing his horse to check up just as he was making his surge and also impacting **Long Range Toddy**.

"I never doubted it. After watching it a few times, I knew they were going to take him down. They had to take him down," Casse said. "I feel bad for **Gary Barber**, because he missed his chance at possibly winning the Kentucky Derby because our horse was loading up, he wanting to run over top of that horse. A lot of people said the best horse won, you know, maybe he did. But we would have liked the chance."

"Should he have come down? Absolutely. It doesn't matter if it's the Kentucky Derby or not. (Maximum Security) put people lives in danger, he put jockeys' lives in danger. And it's unfortunate because I don't know what he shied from. But I feel sorry for Gary Barber. I feel sorry for (Maximum Security's owners **Gary** and **Mary West**) because they won the biggest race of their lives and got DQ'd. I feel bad for (jockey) **Luis Saez** and (trainer) **Jason Servis** and I feel bad for (**Country House's** trainer) **Bill Mott**. I've known Bill my entire racing life and Bill is maybe one of the classiest men I've ever been around. I know it's nice to win but he didn't want to win it that way."

Given the way War of Will was moving approaching the far turn, he was arguably the one most compromised by Maximum Security coming out when he did. When asked if he or jockey **Tyler Gaffalione** considered lodging a claim of foul themselves, Casse explained that he didn't feel it would be worth it given where they finished.

"You have to remember... we're only seeing a little bit of (the race live). I didn't really realize what happened. Tyler came back and said 'I almost went down' and I said to him 'It's not worth it. We were (eighth).' If we had finished fourth or third or second, we would have been claiming foul in an instant."

“Was it unfortunate? Absolutely. But you realize...if I claim foul, it ruins the biggest accomplishment in (Servis’) life and the only thing that’s going to do is move me up to sixth. Would you claim foul? No. Should Tyler have claimed foul? No. I stand by that.”

One immediate impact Casse expects to see as a result of the Kentucky Derby decision is a full gate at Pimlico Race Course for the second leg of the Triple Crown on May 18.

“If he’s happy and healthy we’re probably going to go to Baltimore,” Casse said, adding, “I would think there are probably going to be a few at Baltimore because normal Derbys kind of separate the men from the boys. I would say there are going to be a lot of excuses coming out of yesterday and it will be bigger than usual.”

He may still be seeking his first classic triumph but one thing Casse came away with on Saturday night was renewed faith in his charge’s athleticism and raw talent.

“We haven’t lost any faith in our horse. I’m so proud of him,” Casse said. “With everything that happened in the six weeks (after the Louisiana Derby), he was ready. He was ready. He was on his game.”

PLUS QUE PARFAIT (8th) – Imperial Racing’s UAE Derby (GII) winner **Plus Que Parfait** continued the solid form of horses wheeling back on just five weeks’ rest from the arduous trip to the UAE and back. Finishing a game eighth, he was beaten five lengths after making a bid on the rail turning for home.

Plus Que Parfait’s effort followed solid showings by Dubai Golden Shaheen (GI) fourth **Promises Fulfilled**, who was third in the Churchill Downs Stakes (GI), and Dubai World Cup (GI) eighth **Seeking the Soul**, who was third in the Alysheba (GII) on Friday.

“He’s a little tired today, but he ran a great race,” trainer **Brendan Walsh** said. “He definitely isn’t going to the Preakness, but he could be under consideration for the Belmont. He will definitely like the (1½-mile) trip there. He proved he belongs with those horses, only losing by a few lengths and taking dirt the whole way around. He’s a tough, sound horse and there are lots of options with him in the future. I’d like to get him back to Dubai next year for the (\$12 million) Dubai World Cup, as well.”

Walsh has an affinity with horses going marathon distances on dirt such as the 12 furlongs of the Belmont, having trained two winners of the 14-furlong Marathon (GII), **Carey Street** and **Scuba**. The latter is now a pony based with his Keeneland string.

WIN WIN WIN (9th) – Live Oak Plantation’s **Win Win Win** boarded a van at 4 o’clock Sunday morning for the trip back to his home base at Fair Hill Training Center in Elkton, Maryland.

Also on the road this morning was trainer **Mike Trombetta**, who reported via text that Win Win Win came out of the race fine and that future plans “were definitely undecided.”

CUTTING HUMOR (10th)/SPINOFF (18th) – The morning after the eventful Kentucky Derby 145 had come to its surprising conclusion, trainer **Todd Pletcher** was back at Barn 40 training other horses in his sizable band. His two Derby colts – **Starlight Racing’s** **Cutting Humor** and **Wertheimer and Frere’s** **Spinoff**, who finished 10th and 18th, respectively in the \$3 million classic – walked the shedrow following their mile and a quarter runs on the “sloppy” racing strip.

The trainer said his duo would be on an early flight Monday morning headed to his headquarters at Belmont Park.

“Not sure yet what’s next for them,” he said. “I’ll want to take a week or so to see how things are. The Preakness (Saturday, May 18) isn’t likely, but we’ll see.”

The seven-time Eclipse Award winner as the nation’s top conditioner had an interesting thought on the Derby disqualification of first-place finisher **Maximum Security** by the three stewards, the first time in the history of the “world’s most famous race” that a winner had been taken down.

“You know,” he said, “you can look at it this way: at the biggest moment, they made the toughest call. You can say that in racing we’re not afraid to make the tough calls, no matter the circumstances. How often do we see a big moment in other sports – say a Game 7 in the NBA – where the referees swallow their whistles. That didn’t happen yesterday. It was a tough call, but I think the right one.”

BY MY STANDARDS (11th) –The Derby dreams for **Allied Racing Stable’s** **By My Standards** likely vanished following an eventful start in the 1¼-mile race where he was squeezed by **Gray Magician** out of the gates.

“He came back in good shape,” trainer **Bret Calhoun’s** assistant **Tom Morgan** said. “We tried but got a little unlucky.”

“We got squeezed out of the gate,” jockey **Gabriel Saez** said. “In racing, situations like that happen. It’s disappointing but we’ll get them next time.”

Saez, Calhoun and **Chester Thomas** (principal owner of Allied Racing Stable) did not leave Churchill Downs empty handed Saturday after their “original Derby horse,” **Mr. Money**, stormed to an impressive 5¼-length score in the \$400,000 Pat Day Mile (GIII).

The next race plans for Mr. Money, who rewarded his backers at odds of 7-1, and By My Standards, remain in flux.

VEKOMA (12th) – R.A. Hill Stable and Gatsas Stables' Vekoma came out of Saturday's Derby OK according to trainer **George Weaver**.

Going into the race, Weaver was worried Vekoma may "eat some mud" if the track came up sloppy, which he did.

"We scoped him after the race and there was a bit of mud in the trachea," Weaver said. "It didn't look like he handled the track well. **Javier (Castellano)** put him in a great spot, but said he was out of horse at the three-eighths pole."

Travel plans for Vekoma are on hold for now.

"We are making plans and will probably decide in the next 24 hours," Weaver said. "There is no rush because I have no intention of going to the Preakness."

BODEXPRESS (13th) – Top Racing LLC, Global Thoroughbred and GDS Racing Stable's Bodexpress came out of his 13th-place finish in Saturday's Kentucky Derby in good condition.

The **Gustavo Delgado**-trained son of Bodemeister is scheduled to return to South Florida Tuesday.

TAX (14th) – R.A. Hill Stable, Reeves Thoroughbred Racing, Hugh Lynch and Corms Racing Stable's Tax, who finished 14th in Saturday's Kentucky Derby (GI) at Churchill Downs, is expected to skip the Preakness Stakes (GI).

"I Doubt we would go to the Preakness," **Dean Reeves** said Sunday. "We had some conversation about Tax actually running on the turf. (Trainer) **Danny Gargan** really thinks he's a turf horse but I wouldn't rule out the Belmont. We may think about that. I think, for him, he needs a little bit of a slower pace. I think (Saturday) with the rain I knew the pace was going to go much too quick, which wasn't good for us. He changed his lead four times trying to get a grip of the track.

"I think we will talk about the Belmont and see what happens, who enters and how the horse is doing. He'll go to the Belmont and see about that but I would say we'll also see him on the turf some time."

LONG RANGE TODDY (16th) – Willis Horton's homebred Long Range Toddy had an eventful Derby trip after jockey **Jon Court** had to check hard when War of Will impeded his path around the far turn.

"I walked him around the shedrow earlier and he seemed fine to me," said trainer **Steve Asmussen**, who won four races on Saturday's card including two Grade Is – the Humana Distaff (**Mia Mischief**) and the Churchill Downs (**Mitole**).

"We were in a great spot the majority of the race," Court said. "We got squeezed by (War of Will) when the horse on the lead (**Maximum Security**) shifted out."

MAXIMUM SECURITY (17th) – Trainer Jason Servis reported via text message Sunday morning that **Gary and Mary West's Maximum Security** exited his eventful run in Saturday's Kentucky Derby in good order.

Maximum Security finished first by 1 ¾ lengths after leading throughout the 145th Run for the Roses, but was subsequently disqualified by the stewards and placed 17th for interference.

"For what it's worth, I think my horse was the best horse [Saturday]," Servis said while en route to Lexington.

The homebred son of **New Year's Day**, who entered the Derby undefeated in four starts, is scheduled to ship to Monmouth Park Monday. Future plans for the Florida Derby (G1) winner have yet to be determined.

"We haven't even talked about the Preakness," Servis said.

GRAY MAGICIAN (19th) – Wachtel Stable, Eclipse Thoroughbred Partners and Gary Barber's UAE Derby runner-up Gray Magician bled during the running of the Kentucky Derby (GI) on Saturday, according to trainer **Peter Miller**. He will now get at least one month off training to recover, following his 19th-place finish.

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